















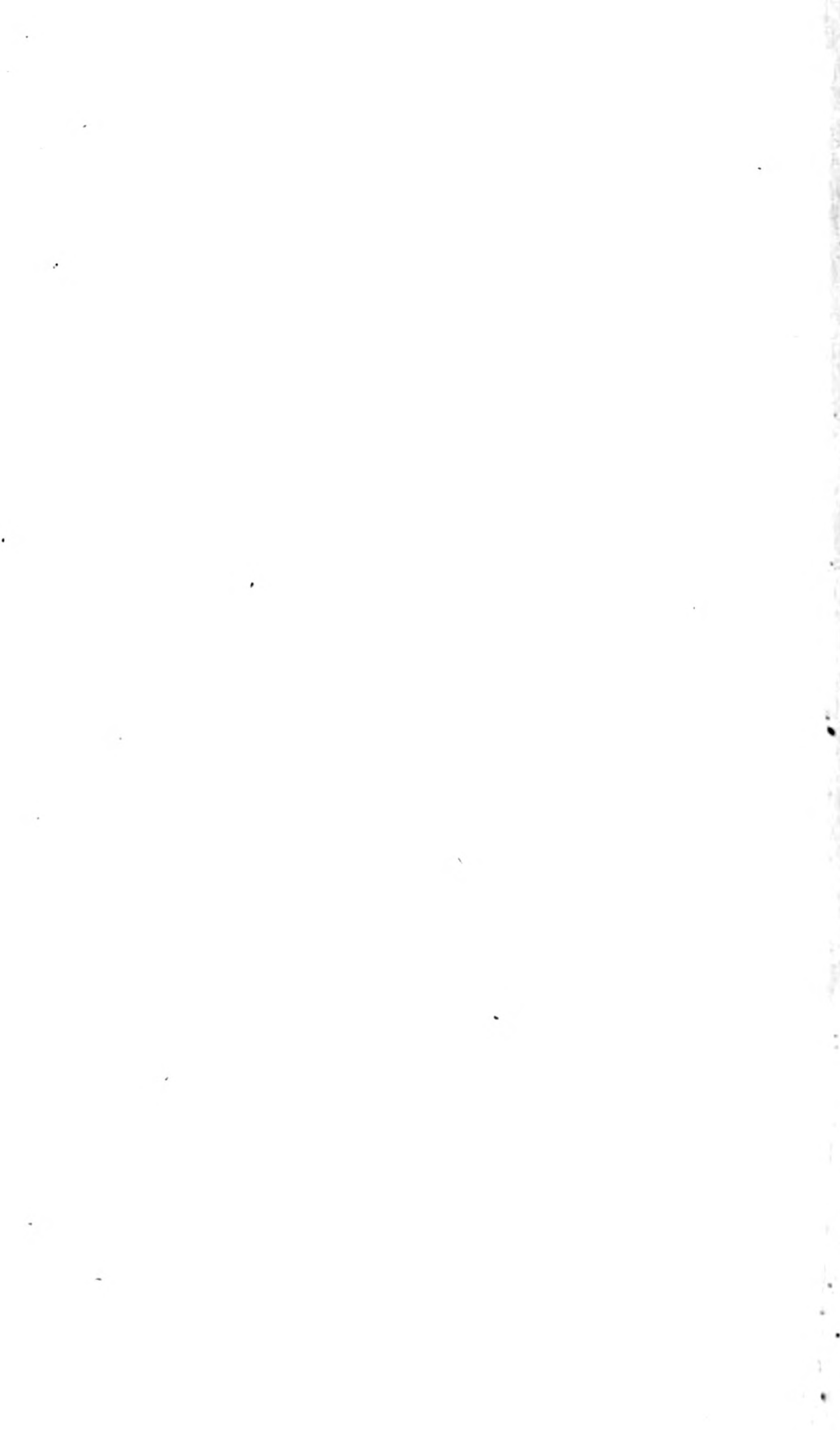




My friends



FERDOOSEE.



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SKETCH  
OF THE  
LIFE AND WRITINGS  
OF  
FERDOOSEE.

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Juvat integros adcedere funteis,  
Atque haurire, juvatque novos decerpere flores.

*Lucret. de Rer. Nat. IV. 2.*

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Manchester:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR.

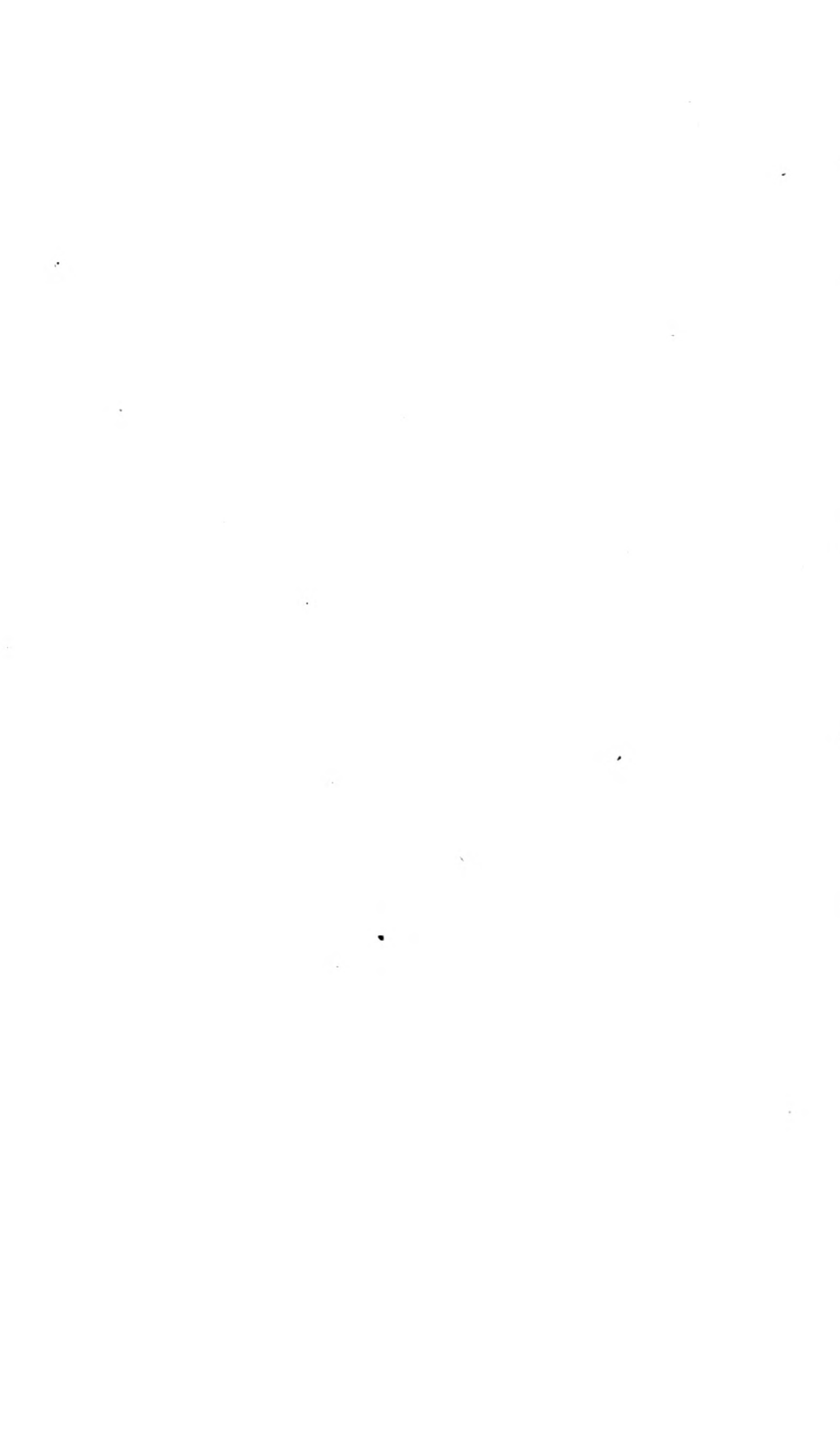
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1823

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TO  
HIS EARLY COMPANION,  
AND  
STEADY FRIEND,  
ROBERT HYDE GREG,  
THIS LITTLE ESSAY  
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED  
BY  
THE AUTHOR.





## Advertisement.

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*THE following Essay, composed as the amusement of some leisure hours, was read before the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester, December 24th, 1819, and the writer having been honoured with a request to allow it to appear in their Memoirs, a small number of Copies is printed separately, not for publication, but for the use of a few friends, to whom he is willing to hope, that it may prove not unacceptable.*

Manchester, July 1st, 1823.



Inprimis desideratur liber *De poetarum Asiaticorum Vitis*; cujusmodi opus cum utilissimum, tum etiam ob novitatem jucundissimum fore puto. Et laudandum foret propositum, tot eximios viros ac miris ingeniis præditos in novam lucem, et quasi vitæ integrationem revocare.

Persis poetam tulit in genere epico sine controversia admirabilem, Ferdusium.

*Sir W. Jones, Poeseos Asiaticæ Comment,*



SKETCH  
OF  
THE LIFE AND WRITINGS  
OF  
FERDOOSEE.

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THE Literature of any nation, however different its tone and character from that of our own country, or however inferior the works which compose it to those we have been accustomed to regard as the models of a correct taste, is yet a subject of reasonable curiosity and useful inquiry, inasmuch as it tends to elucidate the natural history and moral character of a portion of the human race. It is hoped therefore that the following sketch of the life and writings of an ingenious Persian Poet, whose name is, by Oriental scholars, always mentioned with applause, but whose works are but imperfectly known, may not prove altogether uninteresting.

Ferdoosce was born of respectable parents at Tous, a town of Khorasan, a province of Persia, about the middle of the tenth century of our era. He early gave indications of uncommon talents, and most probably enjoyed the advantage of an excellent education, under the best masters of his native place. His ardent love of knowledge attracted the attention of the poet Assedi, who assisted him in his studies, and encouraged his rising genius; and to whose instructions he probably owed his taste for poetry, and that intimate acquaintance with history, which led him afterwards to employ his muse in dignifying and embellishing the popular traditions of his country.

At this period, India was governed by the celebrated Mahmood of Ghezni. The poets whom he patronized, have sung his praises, and ascribed to him the possession of every virtue. He was certainly fond of literature; and learned and ingenious men found a flattering reception at his court. His chief amusements were poetry and history. He had made large and valuable collections relative to the ancient annals of Persia, and it was his wish to possess a series of heroic poems composed from these materials. This appears to have been a favourite idea with some of the ancient Persian Monarchs. The poet Dukeckee was employed for this purpose by one of the Princes of the race of Sassan; or with more probability, for the accounts

vary, of the family of Saman; but he dying by the hand of a slave, after having written only two thousand verses, the design was abandoned. It was afterwards resumed by Mahmood, who wished to add another glory to his reign by procuring the completion of this great work under his own auspices, and he accordingly entertained several poets at his court with this intention.

Ferdoosee, conscious of his genius, was inspired with an ardent desire of enjoying the reputation, which would necessarily follow the successful accomplishment of so arduous an undertaking, and he describes, in animated language, the anxiety which he felt lest another should anticipate him in his purpose. He communicated his plan to his friends at Tous, and, encouraged by them, composed an heroic poem, on the delivery of Persia by Fercedoon from the tyranny of Zohak. This production was received with universal applause, and introduced the poet to Abu Mansoor, governor of Tous, who urged him to proceed with ardour in the glorious career on which he had entered, and gave him the most flattering assurances of success. Ferdoosee has gratefully owned his obligations to him, and has elegantly sung his praises at the commencement of his poem.

Confident of his strength, Ferdoosee now determined to repair to Ghezni, as to a proper theatre for the

display of his genius, and the acquisition of that fame, which he felt that he was destined one day to enjoy. His admission at court was opposed by the rival poets ; (1) but he soon established himself in the favor of Mahmood, who allotted to him the honourable task of composing the work which he had projected. Every evening he read to the Sultan what he had written during the day, and Mahmood was so much delighted with these specimens of his performance that, on one occasion, he promised him a gold deenaar for every verse which he should write, but Ferdoosee declined receiving any reward till the whole should be finished.

At length, after the unremitted toil of thirty years, and in the seventieth year of his age, Ferdoosee

(1) Jamee, in his Beharistan, relates, that as Unsree, Farrabee and Usjidee, three of the court poets were sitting together in a garden of the palace, they saw Ferdoosee enter and approach them. Unwilling to admit him into their society, they agreed to repeat each a verse of a tetrastick and to require Ferdoosee to supply the fourth. They accordingly recited each of them one of the following lines.

The Moon's mild radiance thy soft looks disclose,  
Thy blooming cheeks might shame the virgin rose,  
Thine eyes' dark glance the cuirass pierces thro',

To which Ferdoosee immediately replied,

Like Poshun's javelin in the fight with Goo.

To add to their mortification, the poets were obliged to confess their ignorance of the story to which he alluded, and which he narrated to them at length.



brought to a conclusion his immortal poem, and presented it to the Sultan. But envy and malice had been too successfully employed in depreciating the value of his labours, and the monarch was induced to bestow upon him a reward very inadequate to his deserts. According to another, and, perhaps, a more probable account, the Vizier, who was his personal enemy, changed the promised sum of gold deenars, into silver ones. Ferdoosée was in the bath when the money was brought to him. The high minded poet could not brook the insult. He divided the paltry present between the boy who bore it, the servant of the bath, and a vender of sherbets, and, retiring to his closet, wrote an animated invective against the Sultan, of which the following is a specimen.—(2)

Many Kings have reigned before thee,  
Who wore the crown and diadem,  
More exalted than thou in rank,  
More powerful in armies and treasure ;  
But they were distinguished by piety and virtue,  
Not by rapine and violence :

(2) It is not a translation of the entire satire. The poem contains besides a vindication of the poet's religious opinions, which were those of the followers of Ali. In the arrangement of the distichs which I have translated, I have been obliged to rely, in part, on my own judgment, as the MSS. differ a good deal in the number and order of the verses.

They did justice to the oppressed ;  
They were pure of heart and fear'd God ;  
They sought only a good name,  
And, seeking only a good name, their end was happy :  
But the king, who is confined in the chains of avarice,  
Will be contemptible in the opinion of the wise.

Hadst thou O King ! been the son of a king, (3)  
Thou would'st have placed a crown upon my head ;  
Had thy mother been of noble birth,  
Thou would'st have poured down gold upon me ;  
But the son of a slave will never forget his meanness,  
Tho' he should become the father of a line of kings ;  
From the offspring of impurity expect nothing good,  
For the Ethiopian can never change his skin.

Thirty years I toiled incessantly,  
And I have made Persia immortal in my verse.  
Many illustrious men and heroes,  
Of whom I have made distinguished mention,  
Men—who were eminent for rank and virtue,  
As the noble Jemsheed and the happy Fercedoon,  
Who all lay dead in the lapse of ages,

(3) Mahmood was the son of Sebuctagin, who was once a slave, but raised himself by his merit to imperial power, and founded the dynasty of the Gheznawides, which afterwards became so celebrated in the history of Northern India.—See *D'Herbelot, Bibliothèque Orientale, a Part.*

Live again in my writings. (4)

Thirty years I toiled in pain and anxiety,  
That the king might bestow on me riches and honors ;  
That he might give me independence,  
That he might exalt me among the nobles ;  
At last he opened the door of his treasury,  
And dealt me out the pittance of a slave ;  
The king's present bestowed on a vender of sherbets,  
Procured me a draught of barley-water in the street.

I see that king Mahmood has no greatness of mind ;  
His soul is averse from all liberality ;  
The king who is destitute of generosity,  
Is not worthy of being praised by the poet ;  
The vilest of things is better than a king,  
Who possesses neither faith, nor piety, nor under-  
standing :

(4. So Horace

Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona  
Multi ; sed omnes illacrymabiles  
Urgentur, ignotique longa  
Nocte, carent quia vate sacro.

Vain was the chief's, the sage's pride !  
They had no poet, and they died ;  
In vain they schem'd, in vain they bled !  
They had no poet, and are dead .

POPE

But to exalt the head of the unworthy,  
To expect from him any thing good,  
Is to scatter dust in your own eyes,  
Or nourish a serpent in your bosom.

The tree, which is by nature bitter,  
Tho' you should plant it in the garden of Paradise,  
And water it from the fountain of Eternity,  
And spread about its roots the purest honey,  
Would in the end betray its nature,  
And would still produce bitter fruit. (5)

If you pass thro' the shop of the seller of amber,  
Your garment will retain its odour;  
If you enter the forge of the blacksmith,  
You will see nothing but blackness :

That evil should proceed from an evil disposition is not  
wonderful,  
For thou canst not wash out the darkness from the night.

Yet, hadst thou had a regard for thine own reputation,  
Thou would'st not have injured the poet,  
For the injured poet can complain,

(5) Sir William Jones, in his *Poeseos Asiaticæ Commentarii*, has quoted and translated a part of this satire. In his copy, these verses are followed by several others, containing paraphrases of the above sentiment. They are not to be found, either in my M.S. or in that of the Cheetham Library, and have probably been added by another hand.—*Ibid. Works. Vol. VI. p. 209. Oct. Ed.*

And his satire remains for ever.

O King Mahmood, conqueror of regions !

If thou fearest not me, at least fear God ;

For in the court of the Most High will I pour out my  
complaint,

Bowing down, and scattering dust upon my head.

Having despatched this note, the venerable poet immediately quitted Ghezni, to avoid the indignation of the Sultan, without even the mere necessities of a journey. With these however he was secretly provided by his friend Ayazce.

In passing through Kohistan, Nasir ud Deen Mohtassem, the Governor of that country, sent for him, and entertained him with great hospitality. Mohtassem had personal obligations to Mahmood, and finding that it was the intention of Ferdoosee to publish some poems relative to the conduct of the Sultan, he gave him a considerable sum of money, and requested that he would consent to bury them in oblivion. Moved by the kindness and generosity of his protector, Ferdoosee immediately sent him the writings with the following couplets.

My soul is grieved, O my friend !

At the conduct of that unjust king ;

For he has blasted the hope of years,

And my complaint is gone up to Heaven.  
I had spoken of Mahmood as he deserved ;  
I fear not the power of any but the Most High ;  
I had so blacken'd his reputation,  
That nothing would ever have effaced the stain :  
But Mohtassem commands,  
And I know not how to refuse his request :  
If there be ought improper in the writings,  
Burn them with fire, efface them with water ;  
For myself, O generous chief !  
I pass from this to a better world,  
Where God will listen with kindness to my complaint,  
And the giver of all things will do me justice.

From Kohistan Ferdoosee proceeded to Mazinderan, where he spent some time at the court of a prince of that country, occupied principally in the revisal and correction of his great work. Still, however, apprehensive of the effects of the Sultan's displeasure, he quitted this place to take refuge at Baghdad, where, as soon as he had made himself known, he was received with great distinction by Kader Billah Abassee, the reigning Caliph, at whose court he resided some time in tolerable tranquillity. But the fury of Mahmood still pursued him. He wrote to the Caliph to demand Ferdoosee, threatening, in case of a refusal, to lead an army against him. The generous prince, unwilling to give up the man who had sought his protection, and

unable to meet the Sultan in the field, was reluctantly obliged to dismiss him. He wrote to Mahmood to inform him that Ferdoosee had withdrawn himself from his protection; and bestowing on the illustrious wanderer a considerable sum of money, advised him to seek an asylum with the princes of Yemen. To Tous, however, his native place, not to Yemen, did the poet proceed, where he died, at an advanced age, about the year 1021 of our era.

It is added that Mahmood afterwards relenting in his anger, or perhaps fearing that his conduct would be viewed by posterity in a disgraceful light, (6) sent the stipulated present to Ferdoosee, with a conciliatory letter; that it arrived on the very day Ferdoosee was buried; and that his daughter to whom it was offered, refused it, saying that she would not accept what had been denied to her father. In confirmation of the above account, Nasir Khosroo, a physician, relates in his *Sufiernameh*, or *Book of Travels*, that when he was at Tous in the year 437 of the Hejira, (A. D. 1045,) he saw a splendid public edifice, newly erected, and

(6) Jamee, censuring the injustice of Mahmood, exclaims,

Mahmood is dead, and perished his renown,  
And of his memory nought but this remains,  
He spurned the noblest jewel of his crown,  
Nor knew the value of Ferdoosee's strains.

C 2.

was told that it was built by order of Mahmood, with the money which the daughter of the poet had refused. (7)

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EIGHT hundred years have now elapsed since the publication of Ferdoosee's great work, and it still continues to receive in the East that admiration, with which it was hailed on its first appearance. Whatever indeed be the opinion which European readers may form of it, the *Shah-nameh* is confessedly the noblest production of Eastern genius, and the applause which has been bestowed upon it, by some liberal and enlightened critics of the Western world, may incline us to believe, that all its merit does not depend upon mere oriental

(7) It is proper to state that some of the circumstances mentioned in the preceding narrative are taken from a M. S. account of the life of Ferdoosee, which is prefixed to almost all the copies of his works. It forms a part of the preface to the corrected edition of the *Shah-nameh*, made by the order of Bayasungher Khan, one of the descendants of the Emperor Timour, and published in the year of the Hejira 829 (A. D. 1425—6.) and may be supposed therefore to contain all that was then known of the poet; but as it is the only detailed account of his life with which I am acquainted, I have no means of ascertaining its perfect authenticity.



prejudices. (8) The assertion indeed that all the literary productions of the East are a tissue of absurd fables, written in a barbarous and bombastic style, without any marks of adherence to truth and nature, is much too loose and general, and proceeds oftentimes from ignorance, or from false principles of judgment. This is not the proper place to institute an enquiry into the existence of a fixed standard of taste, which the varying conclusions of different writers on the subject might almost lead us to suspect; it may not however be improper to observe, that the manners, customs, and opinions of every nation, necessarily impart a peculiar character to its literary productions, and that they ought not to be tried without a reference to those customs and opinions. We read the ancient poets, and enter with enthusiasm into their mythology, —a mythology which was the belief of the people, and identified itself with all their ideas: we are disgusted with the modern poet, who, on the sanction of classical usage, presents to us the same assembly of the Gods, still controlling mortal events. We may sympathize with the despairing Roman, who invokes a Goddess, in whom he believes, to favour his passion;

(8) Vide Sir William Jones's *History of the Persian language*. *History of the poetry of the Eastern Nations*, and *Traité sur la Poesie Orientale* Sec. 2nd.—D'Herbelot a l'art.—Richardson on the *Literature and Manners of the Eastern Nations* p. 28.—Malcolm's *History of Persia*, Vol. 11. p. 539.

but we accuse of affectation and want of feeling, the modern poet who addresses his vows to the same divinity. To relish thoroughly therefore the literature of any nation, we must endeavour to imbue ourselves with its spirit. If we do this with regard to the works of oriental writers, we may find in them, amidst many extravagant ideas and false thoughts, many things also calculated to delight the fancy and fill the mind with pleasing images. Why should we disdain to receive from the Persian fables of a Ferdoosee something of the pleasure which we derive from the Gothic mythology of a Tasso, or the Scottish superstitions of a Burns or a Collins ?

THE SHAH-NAMEH, or Book of Kings, contains 120,000 lines. It has been called by some an Epic poem ; by others a Series of Epic poems : but neither with much propriety. It is in truth merely a Historical poem, similar in many respects to our ancient rhyming chronicles, but highly embellished with all the ornaments of poetry and fable. It embraces the whole period of ancient Persian history, commencing with the reign of Caïumeras, the first king, and ending with that of Yesdejerd, the monarch who governed Persia, when that country was invaded and subjugated by the Arabs. Reign follows reign with undeviating exactness: the natural order of events is rarely disturbed; nor are the incidents of the poem made con-

ducive to the developement of one great action, or to the inculcation of any grand moral truth. Sometimes indeed we may perceive a kind of action complete within itself, but we may generally trace it rather to the unity of some great historical event than to the design of the poet. As a work of art therefore the *Shah-nameh* is certainly defective; and it is unjust, in endeavouring to estimate its merits, to bring it into comparison with the more regular and classical models of European invention. We might indeed liken it to the *Orlando Furioso*, to which it bears a considerable resemblance in several respects, particularly in the irregularity of its structure, and the wildness of its incidents; and, still more, in that constant predominance of imagination over judgment, which characterizes the muse of Ariosto. Nor ought we to be so unreasonable as to condemn a performance, because it is not written precisely on the plan which we should most have desired. It is sufficient to establish the excellence of a work, that the author has done well what it was his intention to do. The plan of *Ferdoosee* was chalked out for him; and every one who has read any considerable portion of the *Shah-nameh*, must be delighted at the admirable manner in which he has executed the difficult task imposed upon him.

In taking a view of the genius of *Ferdoosee* as a poet, the object which first strikes us is his amazing

power of invention. The materials, from which he composed the historical part of his work, have unfortunately perished, so that we cannot exactly determine to what extent he enjoyed this power; but that he possessed it in an extraordinary degree, no one, who is conversant with his writings, can for a moment doubt. The records with which he was furnished consisted, most probably, only of dry facts or fabulous legends. He might draw many of his stories, and the names of some of his principal heroes, from the popular traditions of his country, but the form and character which he has given to the whole must be considered to be the fruit of his own creative genius. On a very narrow basis, he has founded a structure, irregular indeed in its design, and unequal in its execution, but of so vast proportions, and, in particular parts, so highly finished, that we cannot contemplate it without sentiments of astonishment and admiration. He has skilfully interwoven into his poem the whole range of Persian enchantment and fable, and has, at the same time, enlivened his narrative with so many agreeable episodes and adventures, that the attention of the reader is constantly diverted, and he is led on, generally without weariness or effort, through the pages of this stupendous performance. Whoever indeed considers the immense length of the work, the copiousness of the subject, and the variety which reigns throughout it, cannot fail to have a high

opinion of the exuberance of the poet's fancy and the uncommon fertility of his ideas.

The originality of Ferdoosee is undoubted. He had no one before him from whom to copy, and his excellences are therefore wholly his own. His conceptions are in general lively and vigorous; his thoughts bold and forcible; his figures striking and animated. Every where, throughout his poem, we feel the glow of a rich and ardent imagination. Ferdoosee has made but little use of Mythology. Events are generally brought about without the intervention of super-human agency. To some this may appear a defect. Perhaps the extraordinary qualities with which the poet invests some of his heroes, as it places us in a manner among another race of beings, may render the use of machinery an object of less importance.

The minute and perfect delineation of character is rarely the distinguishing excellence of very early poets. In a nation emerging out of barbarism, the characters of men are in general sufficiently original and poetical, but they must be viewed in classes rather than as individuals. Those slighter traits which distinguish one individual from another of the same class, can be called into existence only with the progress of refinement, or are too evanescent to be observed till men begin to be brought into closer contact by the influence of society.

Homer, great as he is in this respect, is inferior to Tasso in the fine discrimination of characters marked by the same general qualities. Ferdoosee is still inferior to Homer. Yet the characters of the *Shah-nameh* are, on the whole, well supported, and varied and contrasted with considerable skill; and there are a few which are touched with a delicacy and beauty hardly to have been expected in a poet of his age and country.

The descriptions of Ferdoosee are rich and varied, and it is in the descriptive parts of his poem that he will probably be thought by many to have displayed his happiest talent. Born in the favoured country of fiction and romance; familiar from an early period of his life with the magnificence of the most powerful and splendid court of Asia; it is not to be doubted that his mind must have been early impressed with scenes and stories, and imbued with associations, admirably calculated to make a deep impression on a naturally ardent and lively imagination. His battles are painted in bold and lively colours; and when we read of pomps and processions, and royal banquets, and gardens and palaces, adorned with every thing which wealth and power united can command, we have no difficulty in following the poet in his wildest flights, and are scarcely disposed to criticise his descriptions as too warm, or the language in which they are conveyed as too luxuriant.

His narratives are generally spirited and poetical. His sentiments just and noble. His touches of real passion often appeal forcibly to the heart, and convince us that the poet felt strongly the emotions which he describes. The dignity and beauty of the moral reflections, which are liberally scattered throughout the work, would alone render it highly valuable. (9)

The diction of Ferdossee is soft and elegant, but at the same time bold and animated. His versification smooth and polished. (10) His style easy and natural. He is distinguished from all other Persian poets by that inimitable simplicity which is almost always the accompaniment of the highest order of genius. When we thus speak of his simplicity, we do not mean it to be

(9) The following fine passage may be selected as an example.

One thou exaltest, and givest him dominion,  
 Another thou eatest as food to the fishes ;  
 One thou enrichest with treasure like Caroon,  
 Another thou feedest with the bread of affliction :  
 Nor is that a proof of thy love, nor this of thy hatred,  
 For thou, the Creator of the world, knowest what is fit ;  
 Thou assignest to each man his high or low estate,  
 And how shall I describe thee ?—THOU ART, WHAT THOU ART !

(10) The Shah-nameh is written in the purest dialect of the old Persian, before it had received any admixture of Arabic words. Mohammed, who admired it for its extreme sweetness, used to declare that it would be the language of Paradise.

understood that many instances of bad taste may not be found in his writings, but still they shew a wonderful freedom from those meretricious ornaments and puerile conceits, and those affected forms of expression, which disgrace the best compositions of his country.

It does not consist with the object of the present sketch to enter into a detail of the faults of Ferdoosee. The *Shah-nameh*, admirable as it is in many respects, is still a Persian poem, and the candour of European critics must be called upon to make large allowances for its imperfections. In so long a performance it is not wonderful that there are passages which are tedious, and that the action sometimes languishes. The minuteness of the poet sometimes degenerates into feebleness, and occasionally becomes ridiculous. He has many weak and faulty verses. His figures are sometimes too gigantic or far-fetched; his thoughts often forced and unnatural. His language occasionally is too inflated, and sometimes borders on extravagance. But these and other blemishes may be traced rather to the age and country in which he lived than to any want of genius. "Had he been born in Europe," says the laborious editor of the printed edition of the *Shah-nameh*, "he might have left a work more to our taste, but, born any where, he could not fail to impress on his writings the stamp and character of his extraordinary powers. These are accordingly acknowledged and felt



throughout the whole extent of the Moohummudan world, and will, I doubt not, be recognized in Europe, amidst all the vices of a Persian taste, with which indeed he is much less tinctured, in my opinion, than any Persian poet I ever read." (11)

In fine, Ferdoosee, in whatever light we contemplate him, was certainly a remarkable man; and if genius be estimated, not by the absolute height to which it rises in the scale of excellence, but by the degree which it attains by its own unassisted efforts, then the genius of Ferdoosee may be thought to rival that of some who have produced more finished works, amidst more favourable opportunities of approaching towards perfection. In the history of Persian literature, at least, the *Shah-nameh*, must ever be regarded as a distinguished object. It is the great storehouse whence succeeding poets have drawn their images and fables, and it has certainly had a very considerable influence on the literary productions of the country which gave it birth. Ferdoosee has the rare merit of having identified himself with the feelings and associations of his

(11) Preface, p. 3 to the excellent edition of the *Shah-nameh* by Mr. Lumsden, of which the first volume only has yet appeared, published at Calcutta, in 1811.

It is with great regret we learn that owing to the heavy expence of printing and collating MS. S. the further publication of the work is abandoned.

countrymen. His poems still continue to form the delight of the oriental world, and must endure as long as the language in which they are written. To such a man, in the strength of conscious genius it may without much imputation of vanity be permitted to exclaim, as he has done at the conclusion of his great undertaking, "Henceforward, I shall never die: and every one, who has knowledge and understanding, will, after my death, shower praises upon me." (12)

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The writer of this sketch, is not conscious of having estimated too highly the genius of his Author; yet he

(12) So Ovid,

*Jamque opus exegi, &c.*

And Horace,

*Exegi monumentum ære perennius, &c.*

To me there is something fine in this proud consciousness of genius, relying on its own internal strength, not on the weak and mutable opinion of others,—in these confident anticipations of immortal fame, the richest reward of the poet. Who that has read the pathetic complaint of Camoens, at the end of the 5th. Canto of the *Lusiad*, does not rejoice to know, that amidst poverty and neglect, he was yet cheered with the hope that justice would one day be done to his injured merit.

is fully sensible of the task which remains to him of selecting some specimens of his works. Independently of the almost total impossibility of rendering faithfully, and, at the same time, with grace and spirit, the beauties of an original composition, our associations with words are so strong, and the terms of one language so seldom convey to the mind precisely the same ideas as the corresponding terms of another, that every one must have observed how often expressions, which present to us in the original pleasing images, translated literally, lose their charm or even become ridiculous; and if this happens frequently in the European languages, much more so must it be the case in those of the East, the structure, idioms, and figures of which, differ so widely from our own. Though very doubtful of his power to do justice to his subject, he proceeds however to execute his intention, with rather the more confidence, as, should the specimens, in their present form, not discover the merit which they appear to him to possess in their native dress, he still hopes that, as a literary curiosity, they may not prove altogether unworthy of attention.

Of a poem many times longer than the *Iliad*, and so irregular in its plan as the *Shah-nameh*, it would be impossible, within the proper limits of a sketch, to give a full analysis, and the task of selection becomes difficult. It would have given the translator greater

scope, to have chosen indifferently, from various parts of his works, examples of the several styles in which Ferdoosee has excelled; but he wished to give to his specimens the additional interest of connection, and, at the same time, to afford an opportunity of judging of the manner in which the poet conducts his fable: he has thought it therefore better, on the whole, to take them from the same story, and he has selected for the purpose the Episode of Zaul and Roodabah, acknowledged to be one of the most beautiful portions of the *Shah-nameh*. Other parts of the poem might perhaps furnish us with passages of greater sublimity, but few or none are marked by more tenderness and feeling, or a deeper knowledge of the human heart: qualities which, as they are rarely found in the compositions of Persia, render the genius of Ferdoosee the more admirable.

With respect to the translation of the specimens, he has only to observe that a prose one has been adopted from necessity, but would have been equally so from choice; as he thinks, with Sir W. Jones, that a prose translation only can give a faithful idea of the style and imagery of oriental productions. (13) He is not

(13) A poetical translation of the first part of the *Shah-nameh* was published some years ago by Mr. Champion, including the story from which the following specimens are taken. Of this translation I have never seen more than one

aware that he has taken any liberty with his original, except that of now and then retrenching a few lines, or an epithet which seemed to recur too frequently; and, in a few instances, of omitting or paraphrasing an image which appeared obscure, or too revolting to European taste. He is not so vain as to suppose that he has never mistaken the meaning of his author; those who best know the difficulties of Persian translation will the most readily excuse occasional errors of this nature: but he hopes that, on the whole, his copy, though not servilely literal, expresses sufficiently closely the sense and spirit of the original. He would have wished to have made a few observations on the nature and use of oriental figures, on the proper understanding of which, the beauty of Persian writings materially depends;

copy, and it is, I believe, very rarely to be found. It may be consulted to obtain an idea of the nature of the work, but is too inelegant to be read with much pleasure, and too loose and paraphrastic to give a proper notion of the merits of the original. An elegant translation in verse of a beautiful episode of Ferdoosee, by Mr. James Atkinson, was published at Calcutta in 1814. This work is also I believe scarce in this country, and deserves to be re-printed. It has however the same fault as Mr. Champion's, that of being too paraphrastic. Indeed a poetical translation seems hardly to be the proper medium for making known the peculiar genius, and giving a correct idea, of the poetical productions of nations, whose literature and language have been little studied; as the reader can never be sufficiently secure that the beauty he admires, may not be the addition of the translator. I have lately received from the continent a German translation of a part of the *Shah-nameh*, by Mr. Goerres, published at Berlin in 1820, in 2 vols. 8vo. but as this is to me, I am sorry to say, a sealed book, I cannot speak of the manner in which it is executed.

but this is hardly the proper place to enter on an enquiry, which, treated fully, would extend this paper to an undue length. (14)

To understand some of the allusions in the following specimens, it may be necessary to observe that Zaul is the son of Saum Nereemaun, one of the Generals

(14) As it may however throw light on some of the following passages, it may perhaps be well briefly to observe, that a great and essential difference between our writers and those of Persia, in the use of comparisons and similitudes, arises from this; that we require the thing compared to agree with the object of comparison in the major part, or at least in a considerable number, of its circumstances; whereas the Persian poet seeks only for a single point of resemblance.—For example: no comparison occurs more frequently in Persian poetry than that between a beautiful woman and the moon;—a comparison which, with our ideas, is apt to excite some ludicrous associations. Yet it is certain that no such associations enter into the mind of the Persian poet, who simply means to ascribe to the countenance of his mistress the mild radiance and softened lustre, so beautifully assigned to that planet by Pope in these exquisite verses:—

So when the Sun's broad beam has tired the sight,  
All mild ascends the Moon's more sober light;  
Serene in virgin modesty she shines,  
And unobserv'd the glaring orb declines.

In this and all similar cases it would be a good rule for the translator from the Persian to introduce a word which should mark the point of resemblance—"An eye *radiant* as the moon"—"A hero *strong* as an elephant, and *valiant* as a lion." It may just be observed, in passing, that this oriental use of figures illustrates the application of many parables in the sacred writings,—those, for instance, of the "Unjust Steward" and "the Importunate Widow."

Those who wish to obtain more information on this subject will meet with some curious observations in Professor Lumsden's *Persian Grammar*, Vol. 2nd, p. 494.

of Manucheh, King of Persia. Having the misfortune to be born with white hair, he incurs the resentment of his father, who orders him to be exposed on the mountain of Elboorz, where he is nurtured by the Seemurgh, a fabulous bird which figures in the legends of Persia. Being afterwards restored to the favour of Saum, he is sent in process of time, to govern the frontier province of Zaubul. The adjoining province of Caubul, though tributary to the Persian Empire, is governed by its own King, named Mihraub. The episode commences with a visit which Mihraub pays to Zaul. Zaul receives him with distinguished honour, and entertains him with a sumptuous banquet, of which having partaken, they separate with mutual admiration.

Then a chief, of those who surrounded him,  
Said, O thou, the most illustrious warrior in the world !  
This Mihraub has a daughter, veiled from all eyes,  
Whose beauty is more resplendent than the sun ;  
From head to foot clear as ivory ;  
Her face radiant as the spring, and her form like the  
sabin-tree.

Upon her silver shoulders descend two musky ringlets,  
Which, like a fetter, retain the captive :  
Her lips are like the fruit of the pomegranate, and her  
checks like its flower ;  
Her eyes resemble the narcissus in the garden ;

Her eye lashes are blacker than the plumage of the  
raven ;

Her eye brows arched like a fringed bow :

Would you behold the radiance of the moon,—look  
upon her face !

Would you inhale delightful odours,—she is all fra-  
grance !

Her musky tresses are like chain-armour for the neck,  
Plaited together, knot upon knot :

Her fingers resemble silver reeds,

Upon which are stained a hundred characters.

She is altogether a paradise of sweets,

Decked with every thing that can rejoice the beholder.

Zaul, on hearing this description, immediately  
becomes enamoured of the fair unknown.

When Zaul heard these words,

He was moved with love to the beautiful damsel ;

And his heart became so inflamed with passion,

That understanding and rest departed from him :

The night came, but he sat buried in thought ;

He remained concealed, and a prey to sorrow.

On the following morning, Mihraub again visits the  
tent of Zaul, and endeavours to persuade him to return  
with him to his palace. This Zaul refuses, from the  
fear of offending the King, Mihraub being a descendant



of the usurper Zohak, and professing a religion accounted by the Persians idolatrous. On his return, Mihraub sees in a balcony his daughter Roodabah, and his queen Scendocht, who stops him to make some enquiries concerning the hero.—Mihraub replies :

O beautiful silver-bosomed cypress !  
The world will never behold the warrior  
Who will surpass the illustrious Zaul ;  
In the painted palace, men will never behold  
The image of so perfect a hero.  
He has the heart of a lion, the vigour of an elephant,  
And the strength of his arm is as the sweep of the Nile.  
On his throne he scatters gold before him ;  
In the battle, the heads of his enemies.  
His cheeks are ruddy like the flower of the arghavan ;  
Youthful, sportive, and favoured by fortune ;  
And, though his hair is white as if with age,  
Yet, in his rage, he would tear to pieces the water-serpent.  
He springs to the conflict with the fury of the crocodile ;  
In the saddle he is a sharp fang'd dragon,  
Staining the earth with blood,  
As he wields his bright scimitar.  
His white hair is his only defect ;  
In vain would the detractor seek any other fault :  
Nay even the whiteness of his hair becomes him ;  
You would say,—He is born to win all hearts.

In consequence of this eulogium, Roodabah conceives a passion for the hero.

When Roodabah heard these words,  
Her cheeks crimsoned like the flower of the pomegranate ;  
Her heart became inflamed with the love of Zaul ;  
She declined her food, and became a stranger to repose.

After some time she summons resolution to declare her passion to her attendants, and ask their counsel. The avowal of her affection, the astonishment and expostulation of the slaves, and the reply of Roodabah, are highly natural, spirited, and poetical.

Then she said to her faithful slaves,  
I will discover, what I have hitherto conceal'd ;  
You are the depositaries of my secrets,  
My servants, and the partners of my griefs :  
May good fortune ever accompany your steps !  
Now therefore be informed,  
That I am agitated with love, as the raging ocean,  
Whose billows are heav'd to the sky.  
My heart is filled with the love of Zaul ;  
In my sleep, my thoughts still dwell upon him :  
He occupies my whole soul ;  
Night and day his image is ever present to me.  
No one but you knows my secret,

You,—my affectionate and faithful servants !  
What remedy do you now propose ?  
What is your counsel ? what promise do you give me ?  
Some remedy you must devise,  
To free my soul from this disquietude.

Astonishment seized the slaves,  
That dishonour should invade the daughter of Kings ;  
In the anxiety of their hearts, they started from their  
seats,

And all exclaimed with one voice :

O crown of the princesses of the earth !

Pre-eminent even among the illustrious !

Whose praise is spread from India to China,

Distinguished in the Harem like a precious gem ;

Whose stature surpasses the cypress in the garden ;

Whose cheek rivals the lustre of the Pleiades ;

The fame of whose beauty is spread from Canouge,

Even among the kingdoms of the west !

Have you no remains of modesty ?

Have you lost all respect for your father,

That, whom a parent cast from his heart,

Him you will receive into your bosom ?

A man who was nursed by a bird in the mountains !

A man who was for a sign among the people !

You,—who have filled the world with admiration !

Whose portrait hangs in every palace ;

And whose beauty and understanding are such,

That they might draw down an Angel from the skies !

When Roodabah heard these words,  
Her heart was inflamed like fire before the wind ;  
She uttered an angry exclamation,  
But she cast down her eyes, and her cheeks were  
covered with blushes.

Then she said : Ignoble slaves !  
It became not me to ask your advice :  
The eye that is dazzled by the twinkling star,  
How should it gaze on the splendid moon ?  
He will not regard the rose who is fond of contemptible  
clay,

Tho' the rose is by nature more estimable than clay.  
I desire not the Cæsar, nor the Emperor of China,  
Nor any one of the monarchs of Iran ;  
The son of Saum, Zaul alone delights me,  
Endowed with might and the strength of a lion. (15)  
Call him old or young,  
He is my life and soul :  
No one but he shall reign in my heart ;  
Speak not to me of aught but him :

- (15) Should, at my feet the world's great master fall,  
Himself, his throne, his world, I'd scorn them all ;  
Not Cæsar's Empress would I deign to prove !  
No ! make me mistress to the man I love.

Eloisa to Abelard.

Him my heart has chosen unseen,  
Yes ! has chosen him only from description !  
My love is for him, not for face or figure ;  
And I have sought his love in the way of honour.

This reply overcomes the reluctance of the slaves :  
they accede to her request, and one of them promises  
to bring about an interview.

The vermil lip of Roodabah turned to a smile ;  
She regarded the slave with a look full of pleasure :  
If, said she, thou wilt bring this thing to pass,  
Thou shalt cultivate a tall and fruitful tree,  
Which every day shall produce rubies,  
And pour its fruit into thy lap.

The slaves depart to execute their commission. They approach near enough to the camp, to attract the attention of Zaul, and employ themselves busily in gathering roses. Curious to know who they are, he sends his quiver-bearer to bring back an arrow which he shoots in that direction. The slaves enquire who the hero is, who draws the bow with such strength and skill. The boy disdainfully asks them how they can be ignorant that it is the renowned Zaul, the most perfect warrior whom the world had ever beheld. Piqued at his tone they begin to vaunt the superior excellencies of Roodabah, and break out into an exaggerated descrip-

tion of her charms. Zaul repairs to the slaves, declares his passion, and requests them to procure him an interview with the object of his affection, which they promise, if possible, to obtain. This little incident is, on the whole, well imagined: it is Zaul who is made to desire the meeting, and the honour of Roodabah is not compromised.

The slaves return to their mistress to render an account of their embassy, and express the highest admiration of the personal graces of the hero. The irony of her reply, in allusion to their former depreciation of him, is animated and natural.

Then the Princess exclaim'd to the slaves,  
Have ye then changed your opinion and counsel !  
Is this the Zaul nursed by the seemurgh ?  
This the old man grey and withered ?  
Now his cheeks are like the arghavan ;  
He is lofty of stature and graceful in form !  
You have exalted my charms before him ;  
You have spoken, and demanded a price.  
She spoke, and her lips were suffused with smiles,  
But her cheeks crimsoned like the flower of the pomegranate.

The interview of the lovers takes place in a private pavilion, belonging to the Princess: the description

of their meeting is marked by some touches of great delicacy and beauty.

As soon as the hero appeared in her presence,  
She exclaimed,—Welcome, generous and happy youth !  
The blessing of God be upon thee !

The happiness of the favoured of Heaven be thy portion !

May thy heart ever rejoice in the kindness of fortune !  
Thy soul be ever free from pain and sorrow !

The dark night is enlightened from the beaming of thy countenance ;

The world is perfumed from the fragrance of thy presence.

Thou hast wandered hither from thy palace on foot ;  
Thou hast encountered trouble and fatigue to behold me !

The warrior heard the voice,—

He looked, and beheld a countenance brilliant as the sun,  
Enlightening the pavilion like a precious gem,  
And the earth like a blazing ruby.

Then he said : O lovely maid !

Thy good wishes are the blessing of Heaven.

How many nights, under cold Arcturus,

Have I passed in supplication before the pure God,

Beseeching the Ruler of the world,

That he would give me to behold thy face :

Now I am happy in hearing thy voice,  
In listening to thy mild and gracious accents.  
But tell me now how I may behold thee face to face,  
For what converse can we hold, I on the ground, and  
thou on the terrace ?

The maiden heard the words of the hero :  
She quickly unloosed her auburn hair,  
Plaited together knot upon knot ;  
And she stooped, and dropped her tresses from the wall,  
And cried : Take now these tresses, they belong to  
thee,  
And I have cherished them that they might prove useful  
to my beloved. (16)

And Zaul looked upon the maiden,  
And he was astonished at her loveliness ;  
He covered the musky tresses with kisses,  
And his bride heard the sound from above.  
Then he exclaimed : Far from me be such injustice ;  
May the bright sun never shine on such a day ;  
It were to lay my hand on my own life,  
It were to plunge the arrow into this wounded bosom.  
Then he took out his noose, and made a running knot,

(16) This is the passage to which Moore alludes in his *Lalla Rookh*. 8vo. ed. page 138.



And threw it, and caught it on the battlement ;  
And held his breath, and, at one bound,  
Sprang from the ground, and reached the summit.

As soon as the hero stood upon the terrace,  
The lovely damsel came and greeted him,  
And took the hand of the hero in her own,  
And they were as those who are incubriated with wine.  
Then he descended from the terrace,  
His hand in the hand of the tall maiden ;  
And they entered the splendid pavilion  
Which blazed with light like the bowers of Paradise :  
And Zaul gazed with astonishment  
On her tall form and enchanting beauties.  
Then he kissed and embraced her,  
And said, O lovely maiden !  
When Manucheher shall hear of this,  
I fear that he will not approve of our affection :  
I fear also the anger of Saum,  
And that he will lift up his hand against me.  
Yet, though life is dear to all men,  
Life I will despise, and am ready to resign :  
I swear by the just God,  
That never will I break my faith with thee ;  
I will go and bow before him,  
And supplicate him in sincerity of soul,  
To cleanse the heart of the King of the earth  
From indignation, hatred, and malice :

Perhaps the Creator of the world will listen to my  
prayer,  
And thou may'st yet become my wife.

Then said Roodabah,  
I also swear to thee the same faith ;  
And he who created the world be my witness,  
That no one but the illustrious Zaul  
Shall ever be the lord of my affections.

Thus love sped away the time,  
Prudence was far removed, and passion predominated ;  
Till the grey dawn began to appear,  
And the drum to be heard from the royal tent.  
Then Zaul bade adieu to the Princess ;  
His heart became dark and his bosom on fire,  
And the eyes of both were filled with tears,  
And they lifted up their voices against the sun,  
And said, O light of the universe ! why come so quick ?  
Could'st thou not wait one little moment ?

Then Zaul fixed his noose to the battlement,  
And descended from the pavilion,  
As the sun rose from behind the mountains,  
And the bands of warriors issued from their tents.

On his return to the camp, Zaul **convenes** the sages,  
and demands their advice. They **counsel** him to write

to his father, and be guided by him. Zaul accordingly writes to Saum. In his letter he recalls to the mind of his father, in an affecting manner, the sufferings he had endured, when abandoned by his parents in the mountains; conjures him to consent to his union with Roodabah, and reminds him of a promise he had made when reclaiming him from the Seemurgh, that in all the future circumstances of his life, he would endeavour to efface the remembrance of his cruelty, by a cheerful compliance with his wishes.—Saum is much embarrassed by this letter: on the one hand, he fears the reproaches of his son; on the other, the anger of the King. At length he convenes the sages, and bids them declare what will be the result of the union of Zaul with a Princess of the line of Zohak. After the intense study of many days, they prophecy the birth of the celebrated Rustam.

The sages approached and said,—

O warrior of the Golden Belt!

Joy will be to thee, from the union of Zaul with the  
daughter of Mibraub;

For they are two illustrious equals,

And from them shall be born a hero, in strength like  
the elephant,

Who shall gird his loins in manliness.

He shall bear dominion on his sword,

And shall exalt the throne of the King above the clouds;

He shall cut off the malevolent from the land,  
Nor leave a den of violence on the face of the earth ;  
He shall leave neither Deeve nor inhabitant of Mazin-  
deran,

But shall sweep the earth with his mighty mace :  
From him Turan shall suffer many woes,  
And Iran shall enjoy all happiness.  
He shall cause the afflicted to repose in peace,  
And shall close the door of sorrow, and the path of  
calamity :

The hope of the inhabitant of Iran shall be in him,  
And in him the confidence and joy of the hero.  
The courser of the warrior shall fly before him in the  
battle,

And he shall bruise the faces of the tigers of war ;  
And the heroes, bold as lions, and furious as elephants,  
Shall vanish from before his weighty club :  
And in his time joy shall be to the kingdom,  
And his name shall ever be coupled with renown. (17)

On hearing this prophecy of the future greatness of his grandson, Saum becomes reconciled to the marriage, but writes to Zaul to delay the celebration of it until he has been to the court of Manucheher, and ob-

(17) This and all the descriptions of the character of Rustam in the Shah-nameli put the reader strongly in mind of the Grecian Hercules.

tained the consent of the king. Zaul, transported with joy, immediately sends the letter to Roodabah. The messenger, on her return, is espied by Seendocht, and the secret correspondence of the lovers is discovered. The interview between the mother and daughter is thus described by the poet.

Then she entered into the pavilion,  
Full of care and sorrow and anxiety ;  
She closed the door of the apartment,  
And was as one that is insane from the tumult of her  
thoughts.

She commanded that her daughter should appear before  
her ;

And she struck her hand upon her face,  
And the tears flowed from her radiant eyes,  
Till her cheeks became inflamed like the crimson rose.  
Then she said,—O illustrious maid !

Why hast thou approached so near the precipice !  
What is there desirable in this world,  
Which I have not been careful to point out to thee ?

Why then art thou so unjust to me ?

Tell all thy secrets to thy mother :

Who is this maid, and wherefore is she come ;  
And for whom are intended the ring and turban ?

Roodabah fixed her eyes on the ground ;

She remained abashed at the sight of her mother :

The tear of affection gushed from her eye,  
And her cheeks were crimsoned with the falling drops.  
Then she said,—O prudent parent !  
Love chaces away the repose of my soul :  
Would that I had never been born !  
That neither good nor evil had been spoken of me !  
The warrior Zaul came to our plains,  
And my bosom became so inflamed with his love,  
That the world is become contracted in my sight :  
Night and day I weep continually.  
I desire not to exist except in his presence ;  
The world is of less value to me than a single hair of  
his head.

As soon as he had seen and conversed with me,  
Hand in hand we plighted our faith ;  
But except seeing and conversing,  
Nothing else passed between us.  
An ambassador went to the mighty Saum ;  
At first the chief was grieved and distressed,  
But at last gave his consent :  
I also saw the letter to Zaul ;  
He sent it me by the hand of the slave whom thou hast  
punished,  
And these presents were an answer to the message.

Seendocht was astonished at her words,  
And in her heart approved her daughter's choice.  
She said,—Here indeed is nothing mean ;

For there is no one among the illustrious like the hero  
Zaul :

He is mighty, and the son of the most renowned warrior  
in the world ;

He is wise and prudent, and of a noble soul.

But I fear that the king of the earth will be enraged,

And will raise the dust of Caubul to the sun ;

For never will he suffer one of our seed,

To place his foot in the stirrup.

King Mihraub came joyfully from the hall of audience,

For Zaul had spoken much in his praise.

He beheld, reclined, the illustrious Seendocht,

Her face pale and her heart agitated ;

And he said,—What ailest thou ?

And why are the roses of thy cheeks faded ?

Then Seendocht answered and said,—

My heart is filled with anxious cares.

This collection of presents and treasure ;

These Arabian horses superbly arrayed ;

This palace and these beautiful gardens,

And this company of faithful friends ;

This band of slaves attached to their master ;

This crown and imperial throne,

And all our reputation for wisdom and prudence ;

All now is wasting away :

Unwillingly we must resign them to the enemy,

And tell our sorrows to the winds.

One narrow chest will now suffice for us :

The tree, which should have been the antidote, is  
become the poison.

I planted, cultivated, watered it with care ;

I hung a crown and jewels on its branches ; (18)

But when it had raised itself to the sun, and expanded  
its shade,

It fell to the ground and destroyed my hopes :

Such is the end of all our labours,

Nor know I where we should seek our rest.

Then said Mihraub to Seendocht,—

Is this then any new thing ?

This transitory world is but an inn ;

One is neglected, and another enjoys every comfort ;

One comes and another departs,

And whom hast thou seen that fortune does not persecute ?

By anxiety of heart thou wilt not drive sorrow to the  
door :

There is no contending with the just God.

Then said Seendocht,—know that the son of Saum

(18) Those who are interested in such enquiries will meet with a curious dissertation on the high respect paid to certain trees in the East, to which an allusion is here made, in the appendix to the 1st vol. of Sir W. Ouseley's Travels in Persia, p. 359—401.



In secret has insnared the affections of Roodabah ;  
He has seduced her noble soul from the right way,  
And now some remedy must be found for the disease.  
I have given her much counsel, but it availeth nothing :  
I see her heart broken, her face pale,  
Her soul still full of sorrow and anxiety,  
Her lips still utter the bitter sigh.

When Mihraub heard these words he leaped on his feet,  
And struck his hand on the hilt of his sword ;  
His body trembled, his face became livid,  
His soul full of wrath, and his lips quivered :  
This moment, he exclaimed, the blood of Roodabah  
Shall flow in a river on the ground.

When Seendocht saw this, she sprang from her seat,  
She seized the belt of the hero with both her hands,  
And exclaimed,—Hear one word ;  
Give ear one moment to thy inferior ;  
Then do as thou shalt see fit,  
As thy heart and guiding wisdom shall dictate.

Mihraub writhed, and flung her from him ;  
He uttered a cry like a furious elephant,  
And exclaimed :—When a daughter was born,  
I ought to have caused her immediately to be destroyed :  
I killed her not ; I walked not in the way of my fathers ;  
And this now is the return which she has made me.

Should the hero Saum join with Manucheher,  
And prove superior to me in war,  
The smoke will go up from Caubul to the sun ;  
Neither house will remain, nor stone unturned.

Then Seendocht said,—O warrior !  
Speak not thus wildly,  
For Saum is already informed of this affair :  
Dismiss from thy mind all fear and anxiety.

Mihraub answered,—O radiant beauty !  
Speak not to me deceitfully :  
My heart would be free from pain,  
Wert thou secure from injury :  
Than Zaul there is not a man more estimable,  
Either among the nobles or the people ;  
Who is there who would not desire the alliance of  
    Saum,  
From Awaz even to Kandahar ?

Then Seendocht said,—O illustrious chief !  
Why should I speak the words of deceit ?  
Thy dangers are plainly my dangers,  
And thy sorrowing heart is bound up in mine.  
For this didst thou see me thoughtful and anxious,  
Plunged in sorrow, and joy banished from my soul.  
Yet should this be brought to pass, it were not so  
    wonderful,

That thou should'st regard it as impossible :  
Fereedoon approved the daughters of Arabia ;  
The conqueror of the world saw, and gave his consent.

Mihraub gave ear to the words of Seendocht,  
But his heart still boiled with passion ;  
He commanded the Princess to rise,  
And bring Roodabah to his presence.

But Seendocht was afraid of the lion-hearted man,  
Lest he should strike Roodabah to the dust ;  
And that heavenly flower, the pride of the garden,  
Should be swept away from the land of Caubul :  
Give me first, she said, a promise,  
That thou wilt return her safe to my arms ;  
Take a solemn oath,  
That thou wilt wash out the thoughts of vengeance  
from thy heart.

The warrior gave his word,  
That Roodabah should suffer no harm :  
The King of the universe, he said,  
For so foul a deed would withdraw his protection  
from us.

When Seendocht heard this she stretched out her neck,  
And bowed her face to the ground.  
Then she came to her daughter with a smile on her lips,

And a face like the dawn rising upon the night.  
She told her the good news, and said,—  
The tiger has released the antelope from his gripe :  
The hero Mihraub has sworn by the righteous God,  
That he will not injure a hair of thy head :  
Now then put on thy most splendid dress,  
Go to thy father, and lament thy fault.  
But why in splendid dress, said Roodabah ?  
All my hopes are centered in one,  
My heart is fixed on the son of Saum,  
And why attempt to conceal what is well known !

She approached her father like the rising sun,  
Immersed in a blaze of gold and jewels,  
Resembling some beautiful creature of paradise,  
Or the bright sun in the smiling spring.

When her father beheld her, he stood fixed in astonish-  
ment,  
And invoked in his heart the Creator of the world :  
O void of wisdom ! he exclaimed,  
Should a Peri unite with Aherman ?  
If a serpent-charmer should appear from the desert of  
Kohtan,  
Would it not be lawful to slay him with the arrow ?

When Roodabah heard this answer, her heart burned  
within her,

And her face was crimsoned with shame before her  
father ;  
Her eyelids fell over her dark tearful eyes,  
She remained motionless and drew not her breath.  
Milhraub raged like a furious tiger,  
His soul full of passion and revenge :  
Roodabah returned heart-broken to the house,  
And mother and daughter sought refuge with God.

Meanwhile Saum arrives at the court of Manucheher.  
A report of the intended marriage of Zaul has already  
reached the ears of the King, who, having consulted  
his counsellors, is determined to forbid it. He receives  
Saum however with great distinction, and commands  
him to relate the history of his wars in Mazinderan.  
In answer to the enquiries of the King respecting his  
battle with the Deeves, or inhabitants of that country,  
Saum thus replies.

O King, live for ever !  
Far from thee be the designs of the wicked :  
I came to that city of Deeves ;  
What Deeves,—but warlike lions ?  
They are swifter than the horses of Arabia ;  
More valiant than the heroes of Persia ;  
Their army, which they call Sagsar,  
You would say were tigers of war.

When they heard the news of my arrival,  
They became distracted with fear ;  
They raised a tremendous shout,  
And abandoned their city,  
And collected an army so immense,  
That the dust thereof obscured the light of day.  
They advanced to seek the battle,  
Like men insane, or prowling wild beasts :  
The earth trembled, and the sky was involved in darkness,

As they filled the hills and the vallies.  
Fear fell on my army,  
And my mind was filled with anxiety ;  
With a hundred blows of my mace,  
I compelled them to pass the boundary :  
Then I came, and bruised the faces,  
And clove the heads of the enemy.

A grandson of the mighty Sulm  
Came like a wolf to the battle ;  
The name of the illustrious warrior was Cancavee,  
He was beautiful of countenance, and tall as the  
cypress ;  
By his mother he was of the race of Zohak :  
Heroes were as dust before him.  
His army was as a host of ants or locusts,  
The multitude thereof covered the hills, the plains,  
and the vallies.

When the dust arose from the approaching army,  
The cheeks of our warriors turned pale ;  
But I raised my mace, and urged them forward,  
I shouted so loud from the back of my courser,  
That the earth revolved as a wheel before them :  
Courage resumed its seat in the breast of my soldiers,  
And with one consent they rushed to the battle.

When Caucavee heard my voice,  
And saw the wounds of my ponderous mace,  
He came to meet me with his long noose,  
Rushing to the combat like a furious elephant.  
He wished to entangle me in the knot ;  
But I leaped out of the way of danger,  
And, seizing my Caianian bow,  
I selected my choicest arrows,  
Made them fly like eagles,  
And poured them upon him like flame.  
I thought to have pierced his brain,  
And nailed his helmet to his head ;  
But he rushed from the cloud of dust like a mad  
elephant,  
His Indian sword in his hand,  
And approached me, O King, with so much fury,  
That even the mountains trembled.  
With slow caution I awaited his attack,  
Until he came within arm's length ;  
Then, as the warrior threw himself upon me,

I darted out my arms from my war horse,  
And, trusting in the fortune of my victorious king,  
And invoking the aid of the Creator of the Universe,  
I grasped the belt of the hero,  
With the strength of a lion raised him from his saddle,  
Flung him to the ground like a furious elephant,  
And plunged my Indian sword in his heart.  
When their leader was thus laid low,  
The enemy turned their face from the field of battle,  
And flying in crowds on every side  
Filled the plains and mountains, the hills and vallies.  
Horse and foot we numbered thirty thousand  
Who fell upon the field of battle ;  
Twelve thousand valiant men  
Became captives of war :  
What, O King, can the power of the malevolent,  
Against thy fortune, and the supporters of thy  
throne.

When Saum has finished this narrative, Manucheher immediately commands him to march against Mihraub, lay waste his country, and extirpate his family. Saum, without daring to expostulate, promises to obey his orders. On the way he is met by Zaul, who earnestly implores him to suspend his purpose, and to permit him to go himself, and urge his suit before the King. Saum complies with the wishes of his Son, and seconds his request in a letter to Manucheher, in



which he takes occasion to mention several services he had performed, and in particular that of having slain an immense Dragon, which had for a long time infested and desolated the country.

Had I not been in the land,  
Even the mighty would have perished,  
When the huge Dragon  
Came up, and desolated the earth :  
His height was as the distance from city to city,  
His breadth as that from mountain to mountain ;  
The people were filled with terror,  
From the dread of him they rested neither day nor  
night.

I looked, and there was not a bird in the air,  
Nor a beast of prey on the face of the earth ;  
His venom was fatal even to the Kergesh ;  
The grass withered beneath his poison ;  
He drew the fierce crocodile from its waters,  
And the soaring eagle from its clouds ;  
And the earth was cleared from man and beast,  
And all abandoned their habitations to him.

And when I saw that there was no one in the land,  
Who was strong enough to contend with him,  
Relying on the power of the pure God,  
I cast from my heart all fear and anxiety ;

I girded my loins in the name of the Most High,  
And vaulted on my fleet and valiant charger ;  
And, seizing my cow-graved mace in my grasp,  
With the bow in my hand, and the shield on my shoulder,  
I went forth like a fierce Crocodile,  
To combat the terrible Dragon :  
And every one who heard my purpose  
Exclaimed,—farewell, as I passed.

I came, I beheld him like a lofty mountain,  
Dragging his mane as a net upon the ground ;  
His tongue resembled the black tree, (19)  
As, with open jaws, he glided on his way ;  
His eyes were like two fountains of blood :  
He saw me, roared, and sprang upon me with fury.  
It appeared to me O King !  
As though flames were issuing from his mouth ;  
But I shouted with the voice of a lion,  
And approached him as became a valiant man.  
I seized a steel pointed shaft,  
And shot it hastily through the air,  
And so directed the obedient arrow  
That it nailed his tongue to his palate.  
Again I struck him in the mouth,

(19) There is a little obscurity here: the passage perhaps refers to the Upas, or poison tree of Java.

And he writhed from the anguish of the wound.  
 A third time I pierced his jaw,  
 And the boiling blood rushed from his vitals :  
 Then, trusting in the power of the Ruler of the  
     Universe,

I dashed the huge monster to the ground,  
 Smiting him on the head with the cow-graved mace,  
 As though the skies had rained down a mountain upon  
     him.

I clove his head with the rage of a furious elephant,  
 And a stream of poison rushed from his body :  
 The rivers were filled with blood and venom,  
 But the land again became a place of rest and gladness,  
 And the mountains were covered with men and women,  
 Who called down blessings upon me. (20)

The rest of the story must be told in few words, for this paper has already extended to too great a length, and specimens have been adduced sufficient to give some idea of the character of Ferdoosee's poetry. Zaul arrives at the court of Mauncheher. The King is highly pleased with his appearance, and the proofs which he gives of his wisdom and courage; but his fears still make him hesitate to grant the request, and

(20) The reader may compare this passage with a similar one in Ovid, *Metam.* L iii. v. 31. et seq.

it is not till he has again consulted the Astrologers, who return a favourable answer, that he can be induced to sanction it with his approbation. Zaul returns to Caubul to communicate the glad tidings to Roodabah. The nuptials are celebrated with great pomp ; and the offspring of the marriage is the celebrated Rustam, who plays a distinguished part among the heroes of Persia in a subsequent part of the Shah-nameh.

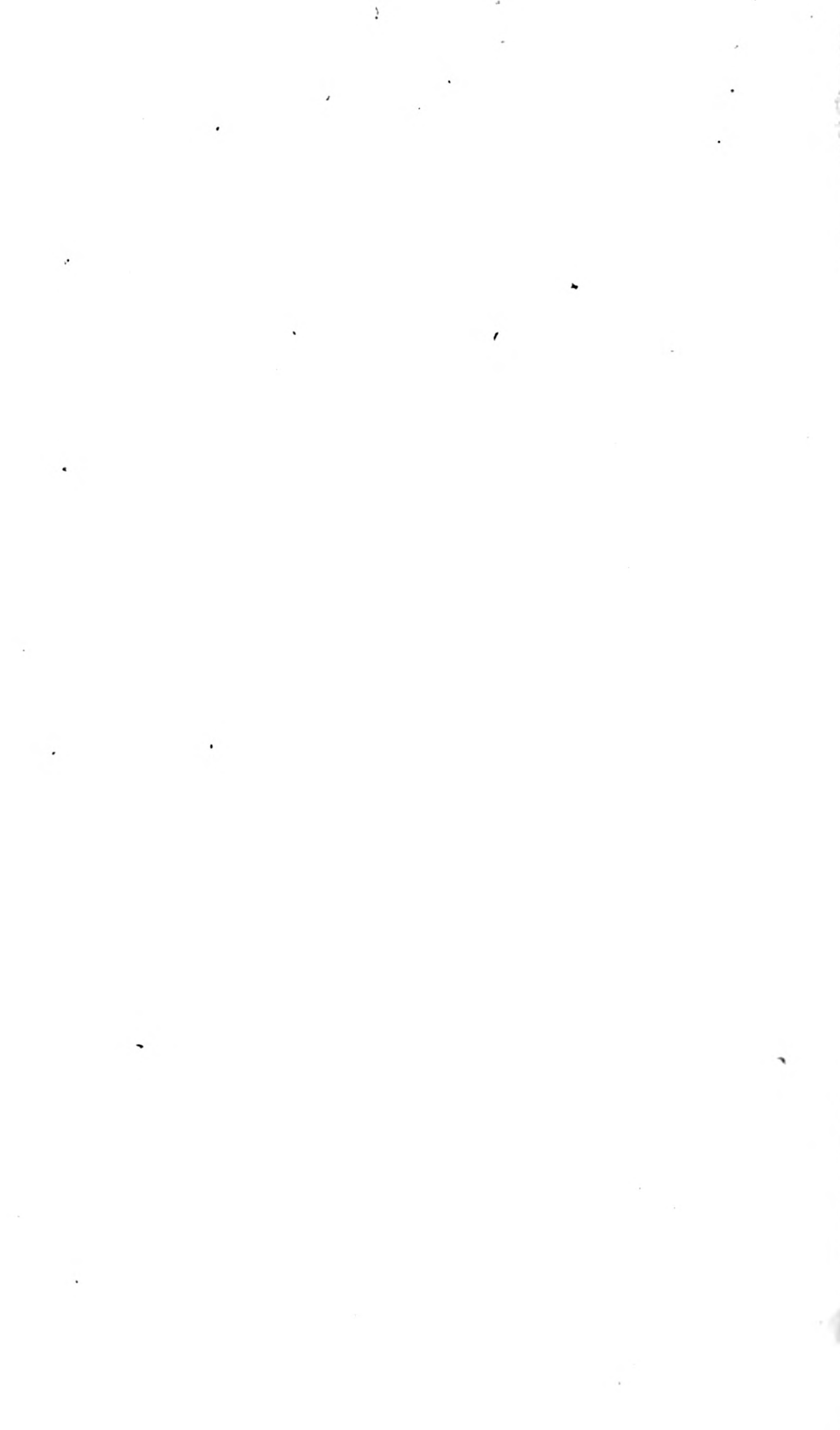
Such is the sketch which the Author of this paper proposed to give of the Life and Writings of Ferdoosee. He has ventured upon a subject, of no general importance, but, he hopes, not totally unprofitable or uninteresting. Should it have been otherwise, he has only to beg the indulgence of the Society for occupying their valuable time, and supposing that these trifles, the amusement of some leisure moments, might not be incapable of yielding them an hour's entertainment.

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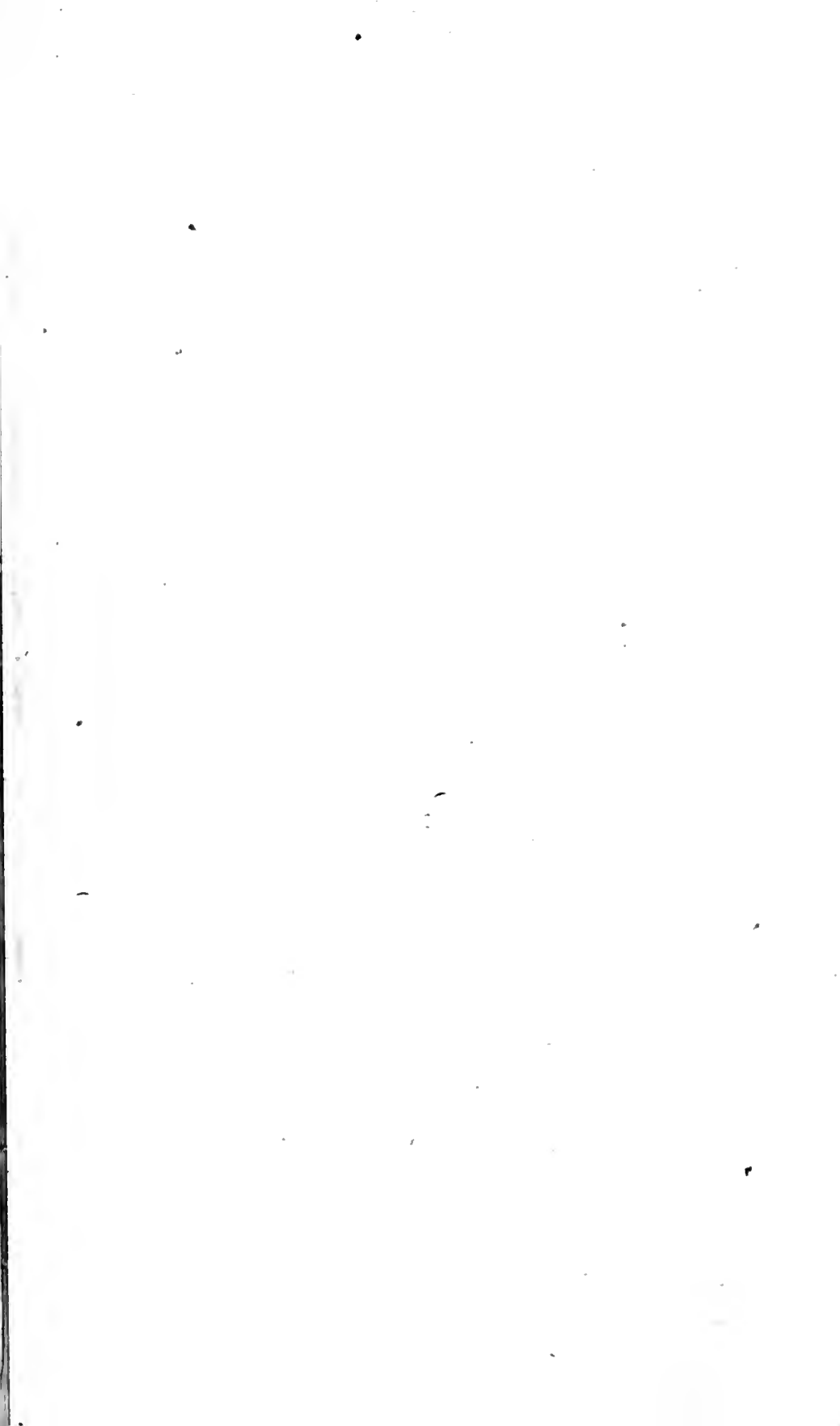






















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[Robinson, Samuel]  
Sketch of the life and writings of  
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